

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation**  
**Management, Leadership and Learning**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	St Mac Dara's Community College
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	St. Mac Dara's Community College Wellington Lane Templeogue
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	70260V

**Date of Evaluation: 17-12-2018**



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An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Scileanna  
Department of  
Education and Skills

## **WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING**

Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning reports on the quality of teaching and learning and on the quality of management and leadership in a school. It affirms good practice and makes recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of educational provision in the school.

### **How to read this report**

During this inspection, the inspectors evaluated and reported under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

1. Quality of school leadership and management
2. Quality of teaching and learning
3. Implementation of recommendations from previous evaluations
4. The school's self-evaluation process and capacity for school improvement

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

## **CHILD PROTECTION**

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.
4. The Child Safeguarding Statement meets the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools 2017.
5. The records of the last three board of management meetings record a child protection oversight report that meet the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools 2017.
6. The board of management has ensured that arrangements are in place to provide information to all school personnel on the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, 2017
7. School planning documentation indicates that the school is making full provision for the relevant aspects of the curriculum (SPHE, Stay Safe, RSE, Wellbeing).
8. Child protection records are maintained in a secure location.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

## WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION – MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING

Dates of inspection	3, 4 and 6 December
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting with Board of Management</li> <li>• Meetings with principal and deputy principals</li> <li>• Meetings with key staff</li> <li>• Review of relevant documents</li> <li>• Student focus-group interview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meeting with parents</li> <li>• Analysis of parent, student and teacher questionnaires</li> <li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li> <li>• Examination of students' work</li> <li>• Interaction with students</li> <li>• Feedback to senior management team, board of management and teachers</li> </ul>

### School context

St. Mac Dara's Community College is a co-educational post-primary school with a current enrolment of 867 students, under the trusteeship of Dublin Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board and the Archdiocese of Dublin. The school offers the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY), the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

### Summary of main findings and recommendations:

#### Findings

- Overall, leadership and management is effective, with some highly effective practices and some areas for further development.
- A positive school climate is fostered with a broad and balanced curriculum, high expectations of students and a holistic approach to student wellbeing.
- Effective special educational needs (SEN) and pastoral care structures are in place but there is significant scope to develop student voice.
- The quality of teaching and learning was highly effective or effective in the majority of lessons with improvement needed in a significant minority of lessons.
- There has been good progress in the implementation of previous recommendations.
- School self-evaluation (SSE) is effective and there is a high capacity for school improvement.

#### Recommendations

- Together with the whole school community, the board should develop a guiding vision for the school.
- Senior management should develop and implement systems for strategic planning for improvement.
- To extend the learning acquired from extensive continuing professional development (CPD), a core learning and teaching team should be established to be led by a member of senior management.
- Teachers should extend the highly effective, student-centred, differentiated, active methodologies and formative assessment strategies observed in many lessons.
- The whole school community should explore and implement ways of developing student voice.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. QUALITY OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Overall, the quality of leadership and management is effective, with some highly effective practices and some areas for further development.

#### **Leading learning and teaching**

The board of management, principal and other leaders in the school promote a culture of improvement, collaboration, innovation and creativity in learning, teaching, and assessment. They establish clear principles of inclusion and social justice to deliver equality of opportunity for students throughout all aspects of school life. They do so in collaboration with all staff.

The board of management and the principal provide a broad and balanced curriculum, making deliberate and informed efforts to meet the needs of the students. Parents are surveyed regularly regarding subject choices. Senior cycle students have a free choice of options, and almost all students are facilitated to study their preferred options. It is welcomed that the school plans to better inform parents about the changes at junior cycle to give them an understanding of different approaches to teaching and learning. Students were positive about their experiences of classroom-based assessments (CBAs). However, there is a need to discuss the learning benefits of CBA outcomes to give students a better understanding of the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement.

Student feedback on TY and LCVP was positive and observation of TY lessons showed evidence of alternative approaches to teaching and learning with a focus on linking TY module outcomes to learning in other contexts. It is welcomed that following the recent appointment of a programme co-ordinator, these programmes are currently under review. It is recommended that student views be sought on areas for development. LCVP students have blocks of work experience built into their programme as recommended in guidelines. Currently, TY work experience is timetabled for Fridays. Alternatives, such as block release or changing the work experience day to Wednesday, should be explored to ensure that TY students have sufficient time in school.

Positive learner experiences are supported through an effective pastoral care system. Tutors and year heads monitor students' academic progress and pastoral welfare. Regular year-head meetings are held with senior management and minutes are maintained. Feedback from parent and student questionnaires indicate that some elements of this system might merit review. Currently, academic monitoring is carried out by tutors and year heads, based on student performance in in-house assessments. It is suggested that a formal monitoring system be introduced to ensure that all students requiring support are identified and to enable early interventions to take place. This system could identify students' potential when they enter the school and track students as they progress through the school.

Currently, the timetabling of the morning tutor meeting means that the first lesson is not of a minimum forty minutes' duration as required by circular 0015/2017. It is welcomed that senior management have undertaken to address this in the coming school year.

An effective core special educational needs (SEN) team is in place and it follows the advice outlined in Circular 0014/2017. A welcoming designated area has been provided for the provision of additional support, and feedback from students who receive SEN support was very positive. A range of supports is in place including team-teaching, in-class support and withdrawal in small groups. While there was evidence of teachers maintaining records of material covered in SEN lessons, there is a need for more co-ordination among teachers to further develop SEN progress reporting for parents.

The whole-school guidance plan is a comprehensive document grounded in research and establishing programmes of work to support students' educational, vocational and personal development. While there is good collaboration with the Care Team and the SEN department, the plan should include greater detail regarding the integration of guidance, wellbeing and Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and how this integrated approach translates into classroom practice. A review of the manner in which students and their parents are supported when making subject choices is also recommended as a significant minority of students and parents reported that they did not get helpful advice and information when choosing subjects.

The board has identified wellbeing as a key area for development and several wellbeing initiatives have already been put in place. SPHE is taught in all year groups and provision is made for all students to receive Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). To improve oversight of RSE in the school, it is recommended that records be kept of the dates of provision of RSE modules. Feedback from parent questionnaires suggests that there is scope to improve communication with parents regarding the provision of RSE to their children. Currently Physical Education (PE) is not offered to all year groups, and feedback from students was that they would like to do PE in every year. In order to improve student wellbeing in all year groups, it is recommended that PE be incorporated in the timetable for every year group.

### **Managing the organisation**

The board of management and the principal fully understand the school's responsibilities and communicate these very effectively to the whole school community. The principal and deputy principals manage human resources well, seeking to maximise students' learning opportunities. They deploy teachers with a view to making good use of their specific strengths and skills. The principal should ensure that all teachers satisfy the minimum requirement of 17 hours 20 minutes of teaching.

The board of management maintains the building, grounds, teaching aids and equipment to a good standard. TY students could be encouraged to undertake projects to enhance the school environment. Currently, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure is well supported but there is scope to build capacity of teachers interested in providing ICT support.

The board of management and the principal ensure that school policies are based on principles of justice and fairness. The principal and deputy principals display mutual trust and respect. They foster a positive school climate and encourage respectful interactions at all levels within the school community. However, evidence accrued from questionnaires and focus groups indicates that the school code of behaviour is not sufficiently robust and that there is a perception among some students and parents that it is not applied consistently. The recent SSE targets of positive approaches to behaviour management are not included in the code of behaviour. This merits further investigation by the school community.

A collaborative review of posts was conducted recently and middle management roles were reassigned. Some roles incorporate elements of both administration and leadership of learning, while others are purely administrative. There is scope for these post-holders to reflect on how they could develop their administrative role to incorporate leadership of learning.

The principal promotes a culture of collaborative review of teaching and learning practices and outcomes, as part of an effective professional accountability process. He does so in an affirming and developmental manner. Subject departments are encouraged to reflect on their practice during department meetings. Teachers are encouraged to reflect on state examination outcomes. When analysing these results teachers could further examine the impact of their methodologies on learning outcomes and student attainment. Within this culture of collaborative review, it is

suggested that the principal meet teachers annually to discuss their work and their professional development.

### **Leading school development**

The school has a clear mission statement. This now needs to be developed by the whole school community into a guiding vision that sets out goals and expectations for the school as a learning community. This should include an action plan for development that identifies smart targets and those responsible for them. This guiding vision should set out goals and expectations for the school as a learning community. The board and senior management then needs to clearly communicate this guiding vision to teachers, parents and students in a way that empowers the whole school community to translate the vision into action.

Those in leadership and management roles are aware of the school's changing needs but the action planning for change needs to be more strategic. The senior management team should schedule regular formal meetings to discuss strategic planning for school development. A member of the senior management team should take responsibility for leading learning and teaching; this should include maintaining oversight of the SSE process and how it is being implemented across the school.

The principal and deputy principals maximise opportunities to develop teachers' capacity and competence to improve teaching and learning. Many teachers undertake postgraduate study, are active participants in subject networks and act as advisors to national bodies. The positive impact of this commitment to learning was seen in many lessons where highly effective teaching and learning was observed. In order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning across the whole school, teachers who receive CPD support from the board should be encouraged and facilitated to become leaders of learning in the school. It is commended that sharing of learning has commenced through peer-observation, 'teach-meets' and the work of the 'technology-enhanced learning' committee.

To further progress developments in learning and teaching, it is recommended that school management establish a core learning and teaching team to support and build on the good work of teachers and subject departments. The focus of this team should be on the leadership of learning, facilitated by teachers. This team should be led by the member of the senior management team taking responsibility for leading learning and teaching.

The principal builds and maintains constructive relationships through effective and regular communication with all school partners. Highly effective transition processes are in place with feeder schools: these include teacher visits, visits by the student council and a transition day. The principal seeks and listens to the opinions of others and formally engages in very effective dialogue with partners. Highly effective links that enhance the provision of a holistic education have been established with the local community.

The school has an active parents' association which supports school events and organises talks for parents. Senior management attends parents' association meetings. Systems should be put in place to include the involvement of the parents' association in policy development.

### **Developing leadership capacity**

The principal empowers teachers to take on leadership roles and to lead learning, through the highly effective use of distributed leadership models. He encourages teamwork in all aspects of school life, motivating staff teams and working groups to lead developments in key areas, thus building leadership capacity. An effective mentoring programme is in place that serves both to support teachers in new roles, and to develop the leadership capacity of mentors.

The range of extra-curricular activities offered to students presents many opportunities for the development of students' leadership skills. Teachers are to be commended for offering their time to enable these activities to take place.

An effective student mentor scheme is in place where TY students are trained to mentor first-year students. The student council is democratically elected through a proportional representation system that is run by students. The student council meets regularly and also liaises with local primary schools. However, feedback from student focus groups and student questionnaires reveals a need to actively consult and engage with students to review and improve teaching, learning and assessment practices and to include student voice in policy development.

## **2. QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING**

### **Learner outcomes and experiences**

The quality of teaching and learning was highly effective or effective in the majority of lessons with improvement needed in a significant minority of lessons.

In all lessons observed, interactions among students and between students and teachers were very respectful and positive. The school's emphasis on wellbeing and positive affirmation of students was evident in lessons. In the majority of lessons, students were motivated to learn, and this was linked to having a clear sense of attainable learning outcomes. They saw themselves as learners and demonstrated this in their positive approach to their work.

In the highly effective lessons observed, students were encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning through the explicit teaching of skills such as managing their own learning, peer evaluation and self-evaluation. This practice should be extended. In a significant minority of lessons, student engagement could have been improved through increasing student voice in the classroom. Questionnaire responses and feedback from the student focus group interview indicate that most students feel that they are doing well at school. They reported that teachers encouraged them to do their best and this was evident in lessons.

In all lessons observed, students were provided with opportunities to work independently in a purposeful manner. In the more effective lessons, opportunities to work collaboratively were woven into the lesson through 'think, pair and share' activities, pair work and group work, enabling students to actively engage in their own learning and discuss their learning with their peers. Students' views gathered during the evaluation indicated that, in some lessons, they would welcome increased opportunities to work collaboratively and discuss their learning.

In the majority of lessons observed there was a good balance between teacher exposition and student input. In the highly effective lessons, students were encouraged to reflect on their learning and discuss learning with their peers. They asked questions and suggested possible solutions very confidently. They were willing to risk incorrect responses, and understood the value of making mistakes, using them as learning opportunities. In the most effective lessons, learners demonstrated a high level of motivation, and enjoyed engaging and persisting with increasingly challenging work.

### **Teachers' individual and collective practice**

In all lessons visited teachers had high expectations of students' behaviour and work. Teachers demonstrated high levels of competence and proficiency in the skills and knowledge of their subject areas.

Highly effective enquiry-based approaches to learning were observed in many lessons, where teachers skilfully balanced their own input with student participation and response. In these lessons,

active methodologies stimulated student engagement and promoted student voice. Teachers used students' own ideas to build on and extend student learning. There were high levels of participation in these lessons, with students contributing to class discussions. In a significant minority of lessons, however, the teacher's voice predominated and potential opportunities for greater student interaction and discussion were not exploited. In these lessons, students were passive receivers of knowledge and they copied down notes from the board. It is recommended that the highly effective active-learning practices observed in some lessons be extended throughout the school.

In most lessons observed, teachers were aware of students' individual learning needs, but approaches to differentiation varied. In many lessons, the same content was delivered to all students, meaning that some students were unable to fully access the material as it was too difficult for them, while other students finished quickly and had to wait for their peers to finish. In the highly effective lessons, teachers responded to students' learning needs through differentiated questioning and circulating to offer support. In addition, they designed and implemented personalised interventions to help students to overcome challenges or to extend their learning. This very good practice should be extended.

In-class formative assessment was primarily through the use of questioning. Where it was effective, teachers used a mix of global and directed questioning. Highly effective practice was observed where teachers ensured all students had opportunities to participate, and ensured gender balance in asking questions and choosing students to answer questions. A review of student written work revealed that many teachers provide regular, constructive developmental written feedback to students on how to improve their work. This highly effective practice should be extended throughout the school. The highly effective in-class and written formative assessment provided by some teachers to advise students on how to improve their learning should be provided by all teachers.

Some classrooms were configured to encourage collaborative learning and these layouts contributed to more active learning. These configurations enabled teachers to circulate easily, facilitating learning and offering support to learners. Many classrooms were laid out traditionally, which in many instances led to a more passive approach to teaching and learning. It is recommended that teachers consider classroom layout and the impact it has on wellbeing and teaching and learning.

There is a culture of teacher collaborative practice in the school. Teachers have regular formal subject department meetings and have many informal discussions about teaching and learning. Minutes of subject department meetings reveal that teachers engage in professional collaborative review of teaching and learning practices. Subject departments analyse and reflect on results in certificate examinations. Teachers plan collaboratively for learning, but the quality of the curriculum planning reviewed varied. Some plans were driven by textbooks with little reference to teaching methodologies or additional resources. Highly effective active planning, designed to support and enhance teaching and learning, was evident in some subject department curricular plans. This good practice should be extended.

### **3. IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PREVIOUS EVALUATIONS**

Previous evaluations were conducted in Spanish 2017, Home Economics 2016, LCVP 2014, Maths 2013, and Business 2011. Overall, there has been good progress in the implementation of recommendations arising from these reports; however, evidence from lesson observations suggests that there is still scope to improve the consistency of implementation of some of the recommendations.

#### **4. THE SCHOOL'S SELF-EVALUATION PROCESS AND CAPACITY FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT**

##### **The School's Self-Evaluation Process**

Effective procedures for school self-evaluation are in place in the school. However, a broader application of the SSE process would be worthwhile. Previous SSE focuses on literacy, numeracy and homework have led to improvements in these areas. The current SSE focus is on positive affirmation. It is recommended that when formulating SSE targets, specific reference should be made to what every teacher needs to do in every lesson to improve teaching and learning.

##### **The School's Capacity for Improvement**

The school has a high capacity to drive improvement. Highly effective devolved leadership structures and processes are in place which will help build current and future capacity.

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

## **Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board of Management welcomes the very positive WSE-MLL report and in particular the following findings;

- The positive school climate promoted by the Board of Management, the Senior Management and the staff of the school.
- The promotion of a culture of improvement, collaboration and creativity in learning, teaching and assessment.
- The effective pastoral care system.
- The effective SEN team and the very positive feedback from students receiving SEN support.
- The quality of teaching and learning which was deemed highly effective or effective in the majority of lessons.
- The School self-evaluation process is effective.

## **Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

The Board of Management and the Senior Management of the school welcomes the recommendations. They have begun to address the main recommendations of the report and will continue to do so.

- The process to develop a guiding vision has been instigated at Board of Management level and will be extended to include the whole school community.
- The senior management team has commenced developing strategic planning for improvement.
- A core learning and teaching team has been established led by a member of the senior management team.
- This core learning and teaching team will work on encouraging and extending the highly effective classroom strategies mentioned in the report throughout the school.
- An APII post holder has been given the responsibility to promote student voice and to work with the school community to develop this.

## The Inspectorate's Quality Continuum

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	<i>Very good</i> applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is <i>outstanding</i> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	<i>Good</i> applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	<i>Satisfactory</i> applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	<i>Fair</i> applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	<i>Weak</i> applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;